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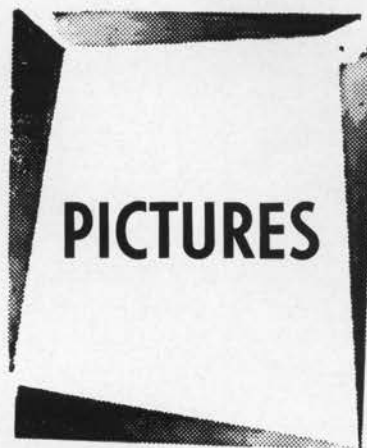
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An Artist Recalls

by Gladys Hamlin
Department of Applied Art



From Her Travels

For three summers, Gladys Hamlin has conducted student tour groups through Europe from the Scandinavian countries to Northern and Central Europe. With 1960 set as the date for her next tour, Miss Hamlin pauses to refresh her memory with the highlights and thrills of her six European trips.

TO RECALL PICTURES of our past experiences is almost as wonderful as capturing the color of the moment. The charm of the diversity of Europe, the romance of Italy, the thrill of seeing a Shakespearean play in a natural setting or by world renowned actors—these are just some of the experiences brought vividly to play as I let my mind wander over my travel experiences.

One of the pictures that comes to mind is that evening just at sunset when we visited Carl Milles' sculpture garden at Lidingo, Sweden, in the suburbs of Stockholm with the towers of Stockholm silhouetted against the sky. There were bronze angels poised with one foot on tall posts and copies of some of the works to be seen in this country such as the Pegasus and Bellerophon at the Art Center in Des Moines. Then came the greatest thrill of all. Carl Milles himself came out to greet my group and talked to us for about fifteen minutes. I can see him yet, standing there in his black top coat with his rather long white hair showing beneath his straight brimmed, low crowned hat. A pleasant serene expression softened the lines of his tanned face as he told of his work and his desire to come to the United States that fall (1955) to see his piece at the Art Center in place. We were most privileged that evening, for the following winter he died.

I had a different sort of thrill when I first viewed the railroad station in Helsinki, Finland, designed by Eliel Saarinen, friend of Milles. Saarinen, known to the people in this part of the world as the designer of the Des Moines Art Center, was one of Europe's leading modern architects when he came to this country in 1923. Six years later when Milles came to the United States, he was head of Cranbrook Academy and could offer his already noted friend a position teaching sculpture.

If Helsinki is one of the modern cities of Europe, Rothenburg, Germany, is one of the very few still remaining that whisks you back to the middle ages

as you enter its gates. It is about half the size of Ames and entirely walled. One can walk around most of the wall and from that vantage point get a wonderful view of both the inside of the city and the fields and valley beyond. Inside the wall the buildings are of either medieval half-timbered construction or Renaissance style with strong medieval influence. The figures in the old clock tower on the town square came out and marched around for us as the clock struck the hour.

In driving from Rothenburg to Salzburg, Austria, I shall never forget the beauty of the scenery and the charm of the little villages with their steep gables and half-timbered buildings, painted various colors and occasionally with paintings on the outside of the building. All this we would have missed by train which, as in this country, passes through the worst part of town.

For drama one travels to England and Stratford-on-Avon where the Shakespeare Memorial Theater attracts some of the top talent such as Laurence Olivier and John Gielgud. It was most interesting to compare Gielgud's interpretation of "The Tempest" with that given by the London players in the outdoor theater in Regent's Park. In the Park the stage is a grassy plot, the backdrop the trees. The actors appear out of the woods and perform right in front. Sitting in the front row, a person very definitely becomes the one to whom conversation is often directed. In London the effectiveness of the play depends largely upon the simplicity and naturalness of the setting while at Stratford it was character interpretation by the actors.

A very appropriate setting for another of Shakespeare's plays is Kronborg Castle at Helsingör (Elsinore), Denmark, which according to the playwright was the setting for his Hamlet. Occasionally the play is presented in the courtyard of the castle which dates from the 16th century.

There is at least one place in Europe in which a bus or car or even a bicycle are not the preferred means of transportation. In Venice they are not allowed beyond the parking lot on the side of the city nearest the mainland. The main street of Venice is the Grand Canal, the side streets are the smaller side canals and the means of transportation are gondolas or launches. Sightseeing in Venice by gondola is certainly a romantic dream come true.